

{As Prepared for Delivery}

**Thomas C. Dorr
Under Secretary for Rural Development**

**Remarks
Press Conference/Grant Announcements
Huron, South Dakota
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Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here. As you may know, my home is not too far down the road in Marcus, Iowa. While Washington has its moments, it is always great to get home to our part of the world.

FARM BILL FORUM

Change is a constant, and that's as true in rural America as anywhere else. As we begin to move toward enactment of the next Farm Bill in 2007, we face many challenges. We can't stand still.

With the fall of the iron curtain and the maturation of the internet – globalization has encompassed us all.

The bottom line is, there are sweeping changes in the world economy, the farm economy, and the economies of rural communities across the nation. We need to work on realigning public policy in a manner that benefits us and our rural communities, regions and values accordingly.

Frankly, that's not easy. It involves some hard choices. It involves setting priorities. It requires that we develop a strategic vision.

And in that effort, President Bush and Secretary Johanns are committed to seeking the broadest possible input from the 60 million people who call rural America home.

To that end, USDA has been sponsoring Farm Bill Forums around the country – one in each of the 50 states. Our purpose to give as many people as possible a chance to weigh in on these important questions. In a few minutes, we will step across the way and kick off another of these discussions, and I hope you will be able to stay and take part.

LOAN AND GRANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Before we do that, however, I want to share some good news.

It is my privilege this morning, on behalf of President Bush, Secretary Johanns, and a great team at USDA Rural Development, to announce 111 funding commitments by USDA Rural Development for projects in 42 States and Puerto Rico, including five projects in South Dakota.

These 111 commitments total nearly \$27 million in investments in rural America. They encompass an astonishing variety of projects reflecting the scope of our mission at USDA Rural Development.

We provide infrastructure: rural water and wastewater systems, electric and telecommunications service, broadband.

We finance affordable rental housing and every year put tens of thousands of rural Americans into homes of their own.

And we invest in economic development, help new businesses start or expand, and create jobs and tax base in small towns.

In total, since 2001, Rural Development has invested over \$54 billion and created or saved over 1 million jobs in rural America.

The five South Dakota projects I am announcing today illustrate that commitment, and I'd like to ask the representatives of each group to come up and join me as they are called:

- The Rosebud Sioux Tribe has been selected to receive a loan of \$254,000 and a grant of \$766,000 to build a new Solid Waste Transfer Station.**
- The South Dakota Rural Development Council is receiving a grant of \$50,000 to conduct multi-site economic development planning in 10 communities throughout Eastern South Dakota.**
- The On Hand Development Corporation is receiving a grant of \$99,000 to purchase and renovate a building for lease to a small,**

minority owned private business that does nationwide professional medical coding. This project alone will create 37 new jobs in Hand County.

- The Value-Added Agriculture Development Center in Lake County will receive a \$200,000 Rural Development grant to provide technical and staff support for producer-owned, value added agricultural projects.**
- And last but not least, the Oglala Sioux Tribe Partnership for Housing has been selected for a \$100,000 grant to implement a comprehensive homeownership/credit counseling program on the Pine Ridge Reservation.**

It is truly a privilege to be a partner with these five communities, and many others around the country. So congratulations, and we look forward to working with you in the future to increase opportunities and enhance the quality of life in rural America.